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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL  
AIR & LAND FORCES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE  
ON THE STRATEGIC  
COMPETITION BETWEEN  
THE UNITED STATES AND  
THE CHINESE COMMUNIST  
PARTY

March 22, 2023

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing  
and Urban Development, and  
Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Quigley  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing  
and Urban Development, and  
Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member Quigley:

As you begin drafting the Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations bill for the U.S. Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development, I write to express my concerns about the availability of affordable and reliable commuting options for working families in my district and urge you to provide the highest possible level of funding for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs that can support state public transit agencies and transportation providers.

During the pandemic, commuter bus and rail lines were hit exceptionally hard as millions of Americans stopped going into the office. Even as public health conditions have improved, these companies continue to deal with ridership that is far below pre-pandemic levels due to large numbers of workers continuing to work from home. This slow return to normalcy has greatly impacted the ability of bus and rail operators to stay in business, and is now causing many operators to consider permanently shuttering critical commuter routes or reducing their frequency of operation. However, there are tens of thousands of commuters per month that still rely on this critical service. The loss of access to these forms of transportation will cause longer commute times and financial strain.

For example, in my New Jersey district, a commuter line—which has operated for 153 years—announced this week that it would cut its commuter bus service due to decreased ridership. Not only has this left riders in search of options to make their way from North Jersey to Manhattan, it has imperiled the good union jobs that the commuter service supports. As you

know, reliable access to transit is crucial for economic dynamism and competitiveness, and I am concerned that major gaps in New Jersey's transportation network will emerge in the absence of immediate action.

In recognition of the importance of maintaining access to bus and rail commuter routes during the pandemic, Congress—with large bipartisan majorities—created the Coronavirus Economic Relief for Transportation Services (CERTS) program in December 2020. This ensured that bus carriers could continue providing crucial commuter services and protected the jobs of thousands of workers. Congress also provided significant funding to state public transit agencies through the CARES Act, American Rescue Plan, and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to maintain reliable service even as ridership collapsed.

While the public health crisis has improved since that legislation was enacted, the pandemic-induced challenges facing the transit sector have continued. With this in mind, I urge you to take all available actions to protect bus and transit access. This should include providing the highest possible level of funding for the FTA, including the FTA's Urbanized Area Formula Grants within the Transit Formula Grants program and other grants that support state public transit agencies, as well as re-opening the covered period and providing the highest possible funding level for the CERTS program.

I greatly appreciate this Committee's focus over the past three years on supporting the nation's public transit agencies and bus carriers, and look forward to working together now to ensure that key commuter routes remain open and accessible to all Americans, which will greatly support the long term growth and stability of our economy.

Sincerely,



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**Mikie Sherrill**  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS